

Georgia Department of Community Health

Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy	Policy No. 401
Effective Date: November 1, 2006 Release Date: October 23, 2006	Page 1 of 10

- References:**
1. O.C.G.A. §45-10-1 et seq.;
 2. O.C.G.A. § 21-5-1, et seq.;
 3. Governor's Executive Order establishing an Ethics in Government Policy, January 2003;
 4. DCH Ethics Statement
 5. DCH Ethics in Procurement Policy

I. Purpose

The purposes of this policy are to assist DCH Employees and Board members in maintaining the highest standards of ethics and to provide guidelines that DCH Employees and Board members should follow in order to avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict.

II. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

- A. "Agency" shall mean any agency, authority, department, board, bureau, commission, corporation, committee, office, or instrumentality of the State of Georgia.
- B. "Board member" shall refer to all members of the Board of Community Health established under O.C.G.A. § 31-5A-1 et seq.
- C. "Commissioner" shall mean the Commissioner of the Department of Community Health.
- D. "Department" shall refer to the Department of Community Health established under O.C.G.A. § 31-5A-1 et seq.
- E. "Employee" shall mean any person who is employed by the Department.
- F. "Expenses" shall mean the provision of food, beverages, travel, lodging, and registration fees that are attendant to an Employee's participation in a public meeting related to official or professional duties. Expenses are limited to those items that are directly associated with the business or professional duties and are not attributable to personal, social or recreational activities.
- G. "Family" shall mean an Employee's spouse and/or dependents.

- H. "Gifts" shall mean, for the purposes of this Policy, money, advances, personal services, gratuities, loans, extensions of credit, forgiveness of debts, memberships, subscriptions, travel, meals, charitable donations, refreshments, hospitality, promises, discounts or forbearance that are not generally available to members of the public. A Gift need not be intended to influence or reward an Employee.
- I. "Honorarium" shall mean payment to a professional person for services for which no fee is required. Honorarium excludes such things as a certificate or other token of appreciation, which has nominal value and may be accepted as a ceremonial courtesy.
- J. "Indirectly" is intended to cover, but not be limited to, any scheme, device or plan which circumvents the literal language of this Policy but provides material financial benefits to a Board member or an Employee or such person's Family. "Limited powers" shall mean those powers exercised by Public Officials, which affect and influence a specific agency. "Lobbyist" shall have the meaning set forth in O.C.G.A. Section 21-5-70(5).
- M. "Nepotism" shall mean demonstrating favor on the basis of Family relationship in employment decisions such as hiring, promotions, transfers, or terminations.
- N. "Part time" shall mean employed for less than thirty (30) hours per week for a continuous period of fewer than twenty-six (26) weeks.
- O. "Public Official" shall mean any person elected or appointed to a state office wherein the person has administrative and discretionary authority to receive and expend public funds and perform certain duties that impact the public.
- P. "Relative" shall mean spouse, parents, children, stepchildren, brothers, sisters, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, grandchildren.
- Q. "State-wide powers" shall mean those powers exercised by Public Officials which affect and influence all of state government.
- R. "State" shall mean the State of Georgia.
- S. "Substantial interest" shall mean the direct or indirect ownership of more than 25 percent of the assets or stock of any business.
- T. "Transacting business" shall mean to sell or lease any personal or real property, surplus personal or real property, or services on one's behalf or on behalf of any third party as an agent, broker, dealer, or representative.
- U. "Vendor" shall mean the definition set forth in O.C.G.A. Section 45-1-6(a)(5), as well as any person seeking or opposing a certificate of need.

- V. "Value" shall mean actual retail price or cost attributable to a gift minus taxes and/or gratuities or a reasonable estimate based upon customary charges for like goods or services.

III. Code of Ethics

In fulfilling designated duties and responsibilities, Employees and Board members should be mindful of the following principles:

- A. Uphold the Constitution, laws, and legal regulations of the United States and the State.
- B. Give a full day's labor for a full day's pay and perform duties with earnest effort and best thought.
- C. Never discriminate unfairly by extending special favors or privileges, whether for remuneration or not, and never accept, for personal gain or for Family, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of governmental duties.
- D. Make no private promises of any kind binding upon the duties of office, since a government Employee has no private word, which can be binding on public duty.
- E. Refrain from engaging in business with the government, either direct or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of governmental duties.
- F. Never use confidential information in the performance of governmental duties as a means of making a profit.
- G. Expose corruption.
- H. Seek to find and employ more efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished.
- I. Uphold these principles, ever conscious that public office is a public trust.

IV. Transacting Business

- A. DCH Board members and Employees
 - 1. DCH Board members and Employees must refrain from transacting business with the Department for personal gain or on behalf of another party. However, it is allowable for DCH Board members and Employees to conduct business with other Agencies as long as the business transaction does not result in a benefit for the Department.

2. Part-time Employees, however, are allowed to transact business with the Department under the following circumstances:
 - a. the transaction resulted from a sealed competitive bid; or
 - b. the transaction does not exceed \$250.00 in benefit to the Employee, or transactions in a given calendar year do not, in the aggregate, exceed \$9,000.
3. A business in which DCH Board members or Employees maintain a substantial interest may not transact business with the Department.

B. Family members

If a Family member of a Public Official or Employee maintains a substantial interest in a business, that business may not engage in a business relationship with the Department. Because Family members are subject to the same prohibitions as Public Officials and/or Employees, Family members may conduct business with other Agencies as long as the business transaction does not result in a benefit for the Department. This prohibition stems from the presumption that the Public Official or Employee, by virtue of his or her Family relationship, has benefited from the business transaction.

C. Exceptions

The following transactions are permitted:

1. A transaction by a full-time or part-time Public Official or part-time Employee that does not exceed \$250.00, or in the alternative, transactions, which in the aggregate in any given year, do not exceed \$9000 in value.
2. A transaction involving the sale of real property through eminent domain.
3. A transaction involving the purchase of health, life, disability, retirement or pension benefits as a part of compensation.
4. A transaction involving a Public Official or Employee and the sale of property or services, where State funds pay for the transaction, and the property or service remains with a third party who is restricted from selling the property or services to an Agency.
5. A transaction between a DCH Board member or Employee and a public contractor.
6. Any transaction involving an emergency purchase by the Department which must be made to protect the health, safety, or welfare of the citizens or property

of Georgia; provided, however, that such emergency shall be attested to in writing by the DCH Division Chief under whose scope of responsibility the purchase is made.

7. A transaction wherein a Public Official or DCH Board member is the only source of supply within the State; provided, however, that the limitation to such exclusive, sole source shall be attested to in writing by the DCH Division Chief under whose scope of responsibility the transaction is made.
8. A transaction occurring before March 1, 1983.
9. A transaction involving the provision of Medicaid or Medicare related services and benefits to an Employee or his Family member; provided, however, in the case of an Employee, he or she shall have no decision-making authority or influence over the determination of eligibility for or amount of such services or benefits.
10. Any transaction between a DCH board member or Employee and an entity within the University System wherein the transaction has been approved by the unit of the University System.
11. Any transaction occurring prior to a Public Official's qualification to run for office or acceptance of an appointment to a public office if the transaction predates the qualifying or acceptance date.
12. Any transaction, wherein the course of business, a DCH Board member or Employee collects sales tax, license fees, excise taxes, or commission as compensation for the performance of a service or good.

D. Disciplinary Actions and Other Remedial Actions

In the event that a DCH Board member or Employee participates in impermissible transactions and/or fails to comply with the reporting requirements in Paragraph V, the following consequences may result:

1. Removal from the Board by the Governor;
2. Termination from employment;
3. Civil fines not to exceed \$10,000; and
4. Restitution to the State for any financial benefit received as a result of the business transaction.

Similarly, if any business in which the DCH Board member's or Employee's Family member has a substantial interest participates in an impermissible

transaction, the business may be subject to the following consequences:

1. Civil fines not to exceed \$10,000; and
2. Restitution to the State for any financial benefit received a result of the business transaction.

V. Other Conflicts of Interest

A. Procurement

The Department is committed to a procurement process that fosters fair and open competition, is conducted under the highest ethical standards, and enjoys the complete confidence of the public. To achieve these important public purposes, it is critical that Employees and Board members have a clear understanding of, and an appreciation for, the ethics in procurement. See DCH Policy No. 402, "Ethics in Procurement" for further guidance.

B. Gifts

Employees are prohibited from accepting gifts from any person with whom the Employee interacts on official state business. To the extent that gifts of nominal value are offered, (i.e., gifts with value of less than \$25.00), they may be shared with other members of the DCH. Exceptions shall include perishable items, such as a basket of fruit, which may be accepted and promptly placed in a common area of state property for sharing among a group.

Employees are allowed, however, to accept a gift on behalf of any Agency or the Office of the Governor or when ceremonial courtesies require such an acceptance. Upon acceptance, the Employee should transfer the gift to DCH, the Office of the Governor, or in the alternative, to a charitable organization on behalf of DCH or the Office of the Governor.

If a Vendor has a family or personal relationship with the Employee, a Gift that is unconnected with the Employee's duties at the DCH is not necessarily prohibited. In determining whether the giving of an item was motivated by personal rather than business concerns, the history of the relationship between the Vendor and Employee shall be considered. However, regardless of the family or personal relationship between a Vendor and an Employee, a Gift is strictly forbidden where it is being given under circumstances where it can reasonably be inferred that it was intended to influence the Employee in the performance of his or her official duties.

C. Honoraria

Honoraria are payments to a professional person for services for which no fee is required. Honorarium excludes such things as a certificate or other token of

appreciation, which has nominal value and may be accepted as a ceremonial courtesy. Employees are not allowed to accept honoraria.

D. Service on Boards

In general, Employees are restricted from serving as a corporate officer or director of for-profit or publicly held organizations. Notwithstanding the foregoing, each circumstance may be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine if an actual conflict of interest exists, which would determine whether the Employee could provide such service.

Employees may provide pro bono services to non-profit organizations as long as such services do not negatively impact the Employee's ability to perform his or her duties effectively and with objectivity.

E. Dual Employment

See DCH Policy No. 411 for guidance regarding secondary employment.

F. Political Activities

See DCH Policy No. 416 for guidance regarding political activities.

G. Nepotism

The manner in which Relatives are employed in any organization may lend to an appearance of conflict of interest. The Governor's Executive Order on Ethics in Government Policy prohibits an Employee from advocating for or causing the advancement, appointment, employment, promotion, or transfer of a relative to a position within the Department. Additionally, Georgia law restricts the Commissioner and Board members from engaging in that same activity wherein the salary of the Employee is \$10,000 annually or more.

In that the Department desires to assist supervisors in making equitable decisions regarding work assignments, promotions, performance evaluations, disciplinary actions, and all other actions which have a direct impact on an individual's employment, the Department reserves the right to impose the following restrictions:

1. Relatives of individuals currently employed by the Department may be hired only if they will not be working directly for or supervising a Relative.
2. If Relatives are currently employed, they cannot be transferred into a direct reporting relationship.
3. If the Relative relationship is established after employment and there is a direct reporting relationship, the manager shall make the determination as to which

Employee shall be subject to transfer, if such transfer does not adversely affect the business needs of the Department.

This policy shall in no means violate state and federal laws regarding discrimination on the basis of marital status.

VI. Lobbyists

Employees must ensure that any vendor who submits bids and/or responses to request for proposals, submits an application for a certificate of need, or seeks confirmation of status, letter of non-reviewability, or opposition has certified on forms prescribed by the Department that any lobbyist employed or retained by the vendor has registered with the State Ethics Commission and made the appropriate disclosures.

VII. Reporting Requirements

A. Business Transactions

DCH Board members and Employees must report, on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State's office, an itemized list of business transactions with the State of Georgia or any state agency. This disclosure statement, containing the previous year's business transactions, must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than January 31 of each year. A copy of this report should be submitted to the General Counsel.

Board members and Employees are not required to submit such disclosure statements if they have not transacted business or if such transactions include only those set forth in Paragraph IV(C)(1).

Additionally, Board members and the Commissioner shall be required to file, on an annual basis, a financial disclosure statement, including all information contained in O.C.G.A. Section 21-5-50.

B. Expenses and Fees

As a rule, all expenses for an Employee to participate in conferences, meetings and other activities on behalf of DCH shall be paid by DCH. Expenses include food, beverages, travel and lodging. In limited exceptions, a person or entity, on behalf of an Employee, may offer to pay or waive registration fees when such fees are attendant to the Employee's participation in a public meeting related to official or professional duties; provided, however, that in no event may such fees be paid or waived by a contractor, vendor, potential bidder or lobbyist. Fees are limited to those items that are directly associated with the business or professional duties and are not attributable to personal, social or recreational activities.

A report of such fees must be filed with DCH's Ethics Officer no later than thirty (30) days after the fees have been paid or waived. The report should include:

1. Name and address of the person paying the registration fees; and
2. The description and value of each registration fee.

C. Gifts

If an Employee receives a gift on behalf of DCH or the Office of the Governor, the Employee must file a report with DCH's Ethics Officer no later than thirty (30) days after the receipt of the gift. The report should include:

1. Name and address of the person giving the gift
2. The date the gift was given
3. The monetary value of the gift
4. An explanation of the disposition of the gift

VIII. Guidance

In the event that a DCH Board member or Employee has reason to believe that a conflict of interest might exist in a particular circumstance, the Board member or Employee should seek guidance from the DCH General Counsel, Ethics Officer, or from the Office of the Attorney General of the State of Georgia.

In those situations where a DCH Board member has in fact identified a conflict involving a matter before the DCH Board, the Board member should immediately recuse himself or herself from any discussion or voting on the matter. The withdrawal of the Board member from consideration of the matter should be entered in the minutes of the meeting of the Board and made a part of the permanent records of the Department.

IX. No Reprisal or Retaliation for Reporting

Reporting suspected policy violations by others shall not jeopardize an Employee's tenure with the Department. Anyone reporting a possible violation of this policy must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation.

Any Department employee may report information, in good faith, concerning the possible violations of this policy in any Department programs or operations. No Department employee will take action against, direct others to take action against, recommend personnel action against, approve personnel action against, or threaten

another Department employee for questioning or reporting in good faith possible violations of this policy.

X. Acknowledgement of Policy


Each Board member and Employee shall sign an acknowledgement that he or she:

- A. Has received a copy of the policy;
- B. Has read and understands the policy or, at least, is aware of the policy and is accountable for compliance with it;
- C. Agrees to comply with the policy;
- D. Agrees to submit the Financial Disclosure Statement as required by this policy, if required.
- E. Agrees to the disclosure of business transactions with the State

A copy of the Acknowledgement of Policy is attached as Attachment 1.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1. Acknowledgement of Policy on Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest
- 2. Employee Gift Report

Approved By: 	Date: 10/23/16
Commissioner	

Department of Community Health**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF POLICY ON
CODE OF ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST
FOR BOARD MEMBERS, ADVISORY COMMITTEE OR
COMMISSION MEMBERS AND VENDORS/CONTRACTORS**

This acknowledgement form is for board members, members of advisory committees or commissions, and vendors, contractors and subcontractors.

- I am a: ☐ Member of the Board of the Department of Community Health
☐ Member/employee of advisory committee or commission
☐ Vendor/Contractor/Subcontractor

I, the undersigned, hereby acknowledge that:

- A. I have received the attached Conflict of Interest Policy of the Georgia Department of Community Health (the "Policy");
- B. I am aware of the provisions of the Policy;
- C. I agree to comply with the terms and conditions of the Policy;
- D. I agree to abide by Section VII. of this Policy regarding disclosure of business transactions.

Print Name _____

Signature

Date

**Department of Community Health
EMPLOYEE/DEPARTMENT GIFT REPORT**

Department of Community Health's Employees are allowed to accept a gift on behalf of any Agency or the Office of the Governor when ceremonial activities require such an acceptance. Upon acceptance, the Employee should transfer the gift to DCH, the Office of the Governor, or in the alternative, to a charitable organization on behalf of DCH or the Office of the Governor.

File this report with *the Department of Community Health Ethics Officer* within thirty (30) days if you have received gifts on behalf of the Department as defined in DCH Policy No. 401. Reports should be sent to:

DCH Ethics Officer
2 Peachtree Street, NW, 40th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3159

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER _____ FACSIMILE NUMBER _____

DESCRIPTION OF GIFT RECEIVED _____

MONETARY VALUE OF GIFT _____

NAME OF PERSON OR ENTITY GIVING GIFT _____

ADDRESS _____

DATE GIFT RECEIVED _____

GIFT WAS TRANSFERRED TO:

_____ DCH

_____ OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

_____ CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION _____
Name of Charitable Organization

I do hereby swear or affirm that the information in this report is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature

Date